

Interview with Virginia Carson-Young

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

VIRGINIA CARSON-YOUNG

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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SUMMARY: Virginia Carson Young was born in Pullman, Washington and educated in Oregon and Washington. She married James Carson who joined the Foreign Service in 1955. She accompanied him as a Foreign Service wife for seventeen years, living in West Africa, Germany, Canada and finally in Haiti where her husband became ill and died. She had become an assistant to Senator Packwood of Oregon while her husband served in Washington. Receiving a reserve appointment in the Foreign Service she was assigned to India. In 1977 she passed the Foreign Service oral examination and became a regular FSO.

Consul General Carson Young served in India from 1974 to 1978 where she was a vice consul working in the visa field and the protection of Americans abroad. She worked with the increasingly heavy non-immigrant demand from Indians, especially prospective students. In the transcript she describes the problems facing a visa officer in this regard as well as the problems of fraud. She goes into detail concerning the work of field investigations regarding fraud in India. She also discusses the problems of being a subordinate officer concerned that her supervisor was either incompetent or a crook.

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Serving in Hong Kong from 1978 to 1982 she had to deal with sophisticated documentary fraud in citizenship cases. Then she ran the U.S. consulate in Merida, Yucatan in Mexico. Her next assignment was to Romania (1987-91) where she witnessed the fall of the communist dictatorship of Ceausescu. In Romania Ms. Carson Young dealt with refugees and battles with the Communist Foreign Ministry over definitions of who were “refugees” and with her problems within the embassy over evaluating how well the Romanians were living up to their agreements re refugees. During the dangerous days of the revolution overthrowing Ceausescu she checked on the welfare of the few Americans in Bucharest and of Romanians with families in the United States. In the post-revolutionary period Ms. Carson Young had to deal with the difficult and poignant problem of Romanian orphans and Americans who wanted to adopt them. Many of the children were HIV positive, and many were not orphans but whose families wanted to have them adopted. The pressures were immense from concerned Americans and the Department of States. There were problems of baby-selling and bad publicity and stingy staffing of the consular section.

Ms. Carson Young's final assignment was a short, but confrontational one again, this time to Lima, Peru from 1991-1992. There she again was faced with a mounting problem with adoptions, including baby-brokers, national publicity and impatient prospective parents with little support from the State Department. Ms. Carson Young ends her interview with comments on the visa process as she saw it.

Q: Today is July 29, 1992. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and as part of the Abba Schwartz Foundation Oral History Project. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. I am going to be interviewing Virginia Carson-Young. I might add for the record that Ginny and I are old friends. I started out in the Foreign Service in Frankfurt with my wife and Ginny was a young wife in Frankfurt at the same time.

Well, Ginny, first could we start out with a little bit about where and when you were born and something about your background, your education and that sort of thing?

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CARSON-YOUNG: I come from the State of Washington and was born in Pullman on the eastern side of the mountains. The family moved to Oregon when I was in high school. I went to Oregon State College and met my late husband, Jim Carson there. I ultimately graduated from the University of Washington and he from the University of Oregon. He took the Foreign Service exam in 1952, following his graduation and a masters degree in American history. We embarked on a hitchhiking trip through Europe, if you can imagine, in 1952. Europe was still pretty much war-torn. Our trip was considered to be quite an adventure. It gave me a lot of empathy towards some of the Americans I had to deal with as a consular officer, because I had done it.

After Jim and I had taken the hitchhiking trip, the Foreign Service exam was just one of several irons in the fire, but he thought it would be an interesting career. He passed the exam, and we decided we would always wonder what it might have been if he didn't give it a try. It happened to be the McCarthy years. There was a period of about two years when no one was taken into the Foreign Service. When the ban was lifted, and he had a call to come in, he was one of four in his class at FSI.

Q: When was this?

CARSON-YOUNG: This was 1955. One of his classmates was Nick Veliotis, who went on to have a very distinguished career. A man named Charles Kiselyak, who is now retired and living in Germany, was another classmate. And Frank McCord, who was with us in Frankfurt, was the third one.

Jim then served 17 years in the Foreign Service and I was a Foreign Service spouse. From Frankfurt, Germany, we came back to the U.S.; he was in the Secretariat twice; we went then to West Africa in the early 1960s; back to Germany where he was Political Officer in Berlin; a year in Canada at their Defense College; and back to Washington. By then we had children in high school. He was assigned as the DCM in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. I was working on the Hill and stayed behind to make arrangements. He became seriously

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ill and was medevaced to Guantanamo and then finally back to NIH, here in Washington. He lived for six weeks and at the age of 46, I was a widow with three children to support.

I felt myself at least fortunate because I had my Hill job which was quite interesting.

Q: What was your job on the Hill?

CARSON-YOUNG: I did the congratulatory letters for Senator Bob Packwood from my state of Oregon. It was at that time a relatively new procedure. I think Strom Thurmond had initiated it. What I did was to collect information from a group of what I called "clippers" back in Oregon. They would send me items from the weekly, small town newspapers and I would compose letters of congratulations for everything from new babies to honor societies, to club presidents. Any sort of achievement. I literally had a champion jumping frog at one time, and wrote him a congratulatory letter in the Senator's name.

My real claim to fame was composing absolutely charming letters for new babies. You know those tiny little print columns in hometown newspapers will have the name and address of the parents, whether it is a boy or a girl, and the date of birth. I would write things like, "Monday's child is fair of face, and your child was born on Monday. I am sure....." It was just amazing how people respond to something like that.

So I was enjoying it. I worked very well with the Senator, it was fun to be on Capitol Hill. So, in 1972, I was leaving to go to Haiti with Jim, reluctantly, although I had always liked the Foreign Service, liked being overseas. But it was exciting to have that job.

Oddly enough after all my saying, "Oh, if I really didn't have to give up this job," (and go to Haiti), after he died and I could, of course, stay here with the Senator, who is still in Congress...I didn't do so. Actually, it was friends of Jim's who made it possible for me to come into the Foreign Service.

Q: How did that work?

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CARSON-YOUNG: Well, it is referred to as a “compassionate appointment.” I took no exam. I really didn't know what I was doing. I was advised that this would be the secure thing to do. I found out after I had been in a couple of years and was certainly enjoying it and supporting my family, that I was on a Reserve appointment, and I had to pass an oral exam in order to remain. I could have taken the written exam at any point, and in a way I am sorry that I didn't. But to be honest, I was afraid to. I wasn't sure I could make it.

Q: Well, I think it is the farther away you get from the academic world...it really is designed for a young person who is all worked up for the exam. I would be, not only reluctant, I just wouldn't take the exam at my age.

CARSON-YOUNG: I think, probably, the idea among my friends who made it all possible was that this would give me a cushion for five years. That I would undoubtedly remarry and get on with another life. Well, I have since remarried, but I stayed with this life. I did have to take the oral exam twice, however. I was posted in India, came back and had no doubt that I would have a quick success in that exam. I was doing well, I was sure. I took the exam and, well an acquaintance of mine who was not on the panel, but was on the Board of Examiners, said, “But Ginny you treated it like a cocktail party conversation. You weren't really serious.”

So the next time around, I came back a year later and was under the gun because if I didn't make it then, I would very soon be out. I talked to another old friend who said, “Ginny, if I were you, I would look into some civil service jobs because we really don't need any more women.”

Q: This was when?

CARSON-YOUNG: I came in in 1974 and went to India, so it must have been in 1976 that I took the oral exam for the first time and then passed it in 1977.

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So the second time around I decided to be a little enterprising. I had a pretty good idea of the kinds of questions that I would be asked. So I went around to some of my old friends. Nick Veliotis, was an Assistant Secretary in NEA at the time. I said, "Nick, in 25 words or less, why is it important to do whatever we are doing in the Middle East?" I went to a military friend of mine and said, "In 25 words or less, why should we or should we not pull the troops out of Korea?" I thought that was a possible question. A friend of mine works on the Washington Post, and she arranged a luncheon with Joe Clelland who was the music editor. I said, "Joe, in 25 words or less, why is American music superior to or comparable to..." Anyway, I actually sailed through the second exam. For one thing they asked me to describe India before and after Mrs. Gandhi's emergency declaration in 1976, and I felt involved and expressed myself strongly about it (and talked lengthily; they had to shut me up). But I also had guessed right on two out of five of the other questions, and was prepared.

Q: First, before you went out, did you get any consular training?

CARSON-YOUNG: Very little. They did not have ConGen Rosslyn at that time. The consular training consisted of talking heads, very boring. Usually it was the most senior person in the three consular divisions, so they were far from the action. Then, because I wasn't part of a class, I came to work in the Visa Office which was located in the old building. It was just horrible, dark and dirty.

Q: There was an office on 23rd Street.

CARSON-YOUNG: It was just in back of that service station on Virginia Avenue.

Q: It was a building I didn't like to go into, I remember, because I was afraid of touching the walls because they looked kind of slimy.

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CARSON-YOUNG: I was so naive. I saw a sign that said, "Meet the Seventh Floor." The Secretary was going to be speaking and I said, "Oh, I am on the seventh floor." But that was in the Visa Office and it did not mean the Secretary was coming over there.

I was assigned to the written inquiries branch of the Visa Office and given just the visa training. So I didn't even have the rapport to develop with the junior officer group, because I was transferred after the visa segment. I worked for four months, then went into Hindi-language training because I had been assigned to New Delhi. Then I went back and took the ACS (American Consular Services) part of the course. So it was very sketchy.

Q: Then you went to New Delhi and served from when to when?

CARSON-YOUNG: Stu, I have served four years in four posts. It is not a recommended career, but actually it worked very well for me and I have enjoyed every minute.

Q: So you worked in India from when to when?

CARSON-YOUNG: From 1974-78.

Q: What was the situation from your perspective in India when you got there?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, it was a two-person consular section. My training had been sketchy. I actually was trained by the FSNs in New Delhi.

Q: Foreign Nationals in India.

CARSON-YOUNG: I had a staff of nine. My boss was a man named Dick White, who has long since retired. He was a man who paid very little attention to the work. He would slip out of the office and be gone much of the time. I was so anxious to succeed...I chose India actually. I fell into the assignment. I was having lunch with some old Foreign Service friends and someone, whom I didn't know, (he turned out to be Howie Schaffer, who was the Personnel person for NEA) said, "Ginny, now you are in the Foreign Service. What

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would you like to do?" I said, "Well, I would love to go to India some time. It has always been a place of fascination for me." I ran into him in the hall about a week later and he said, "I think that assignment is going to work out." So that is how it happened.

I am sure Dick White was very, very skeptical of the kind of help he was going to get from this 46-year-old inexperienced consular officer. But I got there and was very eager, energetic, and loved it. He came in to me after one or two days on the job and said, "We have an American citizen streaking in the Ashoka Hotel, would you go down and take care of her." I said, "Sure." Then I thought, "Streaking, that must mean drugs of some kind." I called the Indian doctor who was the consultant for the Embassy and someone that I had met. He was a Sikh in a pink turban, a Harvard educated physician. I said, "Would you go with me to the Ashoka Hotel? I think I have a problem down there." So he did.

We went down and by then the woman was in her room. She was wearing a bikini, a sleeveless cardigan that came down below her knees, platform-soled shoes, a big hat, dark glasses and carried a cane. There were three men in the room. The place was blue with smoke. She fell in love with the pink turban. She would have followed the doctor anywhere. He said it was drugs. She had money and was from a very good New York family. The hotel was willing to keep her in the hotel if she would just keep her clothes on and behave herself. That, then, became my first American citizen services case.

From then on, Dick White would ask me to do a variety of things. I did non-immigrant visas in the morning, I did immigrant visas and petitions for immigration in the afternoon, and one of the local employees would thread his way up through the non-immigrant visa crowd to have me do notarials or take care of Americans. I was just swamped, but it was exciting.

Q: What was the visa situation in India from the American perspective at that time?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, of course India is a very mixed society. There is a thin veneer, deeper now, but then rather thin, of educated, sophisticated, rather wealthy and middle class Indians. Then there is this huge population of people who are less well-off. So there

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is a lot of pressure to get that non- immigrant visa to get to the United States. And many of them never returned to India, or if they did, it was as an immigrant married to an American. So the NIV line was a challenge.

I must say, after being there for four years, the one thing that I realize now that I did was to develop a very rigid attitude towards students, particularly. I am more generous towards non-immigrant visa applicants now than I was then. I got to the point that I felt that I knew the Indians so well...and I had lots of Indian friends and we talked about how they were trying to get out, or trying to get their children out...so my student visa refusal rate just skyrocketed. I now think that that was wrong. If it is a bona fide person going to a bona fide school, I believe you should give them the benefit of the doubt.

Q: Just to go into this for a bit because what you are describing is a fairly typical reaction. An officer can go one of two ways. One is to continue to get tougher and tougher and take great pride in it and another is to develop more tolerance. Why, looking back on this, would a first time officer get so strict?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, I think a lot of it was a certain amount of arrogance. I believed that I knew, and in fact, I think I did know, what their intent was. The law says you must deal with intent. And many of them did not intend to return. But as we know, our immigration laws as far as non-immigrants are concerned can be very legitimately interpreted strictly or loosely. It is really up to us. If I thought, as I did then, that they were not going to come back, they didn't get a student visa. I even turned down a fellow who had a scholarship to Yale. He had a U.S. resident brother who was his sponsor. I believed the family was grooming him to follow in his brother's footsteps. I was probably right. But, I now believe, also wrong.

In the beginning I would lose sleep over visas that I had denied. I later began to lose sleep over some that I had issued. For students, in particular, I would now give them the benefit of the doubt.

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Q: Well, I am just wondering, I will just throw this out to you...I think part of the reaction, I notice this with new officers, there is a tendency when you first arrive there that these are the rules and you sort of take shelter behind them. You are so worried about making a mistake that refusing sometimes seems almost easier, or you can develop a righteousness...

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes, righteousness is a good word.

Q: ...and one of the factors I think is that most of us are not used to being lied to and this really gets to you.

CARSON-YOUNG: I was just going to say that one of my junior officers, a very bright young woman who worked with me in Mexico, said, "Oh, they are such liars, if they would just stop lying to me!" I said, "Helen, if they told you the truth, you absolutely wouldn't grant the visa." It is not correct, but it is understandable, why they misrepresent the facts to us.

*Q: What were you seeing on the immigrant side?*CARSON-YOUNG: *Oh, Stu, we had two fraud rings that developed in my first two years in India. One of them perpetrated by a local employee, (I think he may have been involved in both of them) but in any case, one was for non-immigrant visas and the other one for immigrant visas.*

Part of the problem was my supervisor, Mr. White, who in the beginning was doing the immigrant visas in the afternoon. He was a very disinterested and lazy man. He would bring 15 to 20 immigrants into his office and have them all swear that this was the truth and then apparently just blindly sign their papers.

I am not sure who brought it to my attention, but it had to be one of the Indian employees. But there were obvious fraud indications, some quite blatant, such as white outs on the information section. We began to see duplications of sponsors and bank letters, similar

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to what you found in Korea. We could tell by the names. I remember one that caught my attention. It was a Hindu marrying a Moslem and that just didn't happen.

We also found that we were sending a lot of nurses to the United States under the old non-preference category which was current at that time. The Indian nursing degree was considered equivalent to U.S. training and there was no other exam they had to take. Actually, I queried the Department several different times about a possible way to refuse these young women who were not nurses. They often came back to file a petition for a spouse, maybe a year or two later, when they had gotten their green card. They were not working as nurses, but as nurses' aides, because they couldn't pass the RN examination. At that time the Department's answer was no, if they have the degree, they qualify. Then we found out that a local employee was adding spouses' names to the records of these nurses. We found out when one of them came back to file a petition for a new husband and we said, "But you are already married. We have already sent your husband to the United States to join you." She was unaware that another fellow had gone as her husband. The local employee who was involved in altering the records was allowed to resign. I am not sure...you know in those days, they really didn't want to fire people for fraud. I remember, I worked with the security officer and interviewed the employee, but we really didn't have any proof, so he resigned. The same thing happened to Mr. White, as a matter of fact.

Q: He had to resign?

CARSON-YOUNG: He was involved in the NIV fraud side. He had a girlfriend who worked, I think, with a travel agent. I first learned about it when...because I did all of the NIVs...I came in one morning and there was a stack of passports on the counter with visas in them. I asked the local employee, "What is all this?" He said, "Oh, Mr. White approved those." I looked at them, and they were all Gujaratis, out of our consulate district.

Q: A Gujarati is?

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CARSON-YOUNG: From a province in India where they would have applied in Bombay. They would have had to be physically present and come in for an interview in our consular district. I sure didn't remember seeing them, and Mr. White wouldn't have normally done the interview. I went in to Mr. White and said, "What is all this." He said, "Oh, I know I shouldn't have, but I felt sorry for them and I think they are okay." They were supposedly going as cultural people-to-people ambassadors, when you could tell from the applications that they were farmers and peasants. And then similar things happened to people in the Punjabi area, which was in our consular district. Issuances that I didn't know anything about. So I tried to check up on them.

I often went off on fraud interviews at the request of the INS. I don't know if you ever had this sort of experience. We have a reciprocal agreement with INS that if they ask a consular officer to make an investigation of an individual who has applied for adjustment of status in the United States, we have an obligation to do that. Now, we can plead lack of staff, funds, etc., but my understanding is that we have to find a way to fit the investigation into our schedule. At least, in India that was the way it was handled.

So I would wait until I had maybe a dozen or more cases. They were almost all from a general area, the Punjab, where the people were bright, aggressive and jobless. They, quite understandably, were the ones who were making up stories about visiting a cousin, managed to get a visitor's visa and, in most cases, were either claiming work experience in India that would qualify them for resident status in the United States, or were marrying an American in order to stay in the United States, but were already married in India and had never divorced.

So I would go in an Embassy car, with a driver, and one of my local employees and my stack of files, and a cooler with drinks and sandwiches and spend sometimes a week or ten days on the road, stopping wherever we landed. My assistant was a born detective. He loved tracking a case, going from village to village, finding out the facts. I did not know in the beginning that the reports I sent back had to be made available to the attorney for

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the immigrant who was trying to adjust. So, at one point I remember I went to the Windsor Hotel in Ludhiana, which was one of our bad areas. The man who was trying to adjust had claimed experience as a cook at the Windsor Hotel in Ludhiana. The Windsor Hotel sounds like a nice place. Well, it was a little hole in the wall, and it was dark. I went there about 11 o'clock in the morning. I had to go downstairs to speak with the manager. My assistant and I were holding hands, since I was a little bit frightened. I got back to what they called the kitchen, but it was really an area outside. Here was this little man, the present cook, wearing a dhoti, squatting over a pot and stirring it. I took a photograph of him, and wrote up the report. I said, "It is to Ajit Singh's credit that he never worked in a crummy place like this." They had no records of him ever working there. Well, of course, my language was made available to the attorney representing Mr. Singh.

But, back to my fraud cases, I checked up on the NIV applicants whose passports I'd found on the counter. It was in some cases almost a year after the visitor's visas had been issued by Mr. White. I would go to the home address and say, "Is your husband here?" The woman of the house would say, "Oh, no. He has a job in the United States."

So I came back to the Embassy and went to the Personnel Officer and said, "You know, Dick White signed all of these visas. He is on home leave and has been given an extension of his assignment in order to come back. I wondered how wise an idea that was, since I had been told that he had been involved in some kind of illegal activities, even before I arrived in India." And she said, "Well, is this McCarthy days? Is this guilt by coincidence? Have all of your visa applicants come back?" And I backed off. I didn't want to be the bell ringer. Mr. White had been very nice to me. I know now that I went to the wrong person.

Q: From a practical point of view, a personnel officer is the last person to be interested in anything else...CARSON-YOUNG: In fact, when Mr. White's problems became known in Washington, the DCM then heard about them and called me. I said, "Yes, I have had some misgivings." He said, "Why didn't you come to me?" "Well, I didn't know who to see".

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In fact I sometimes wonder...I had it happen in another post where the Consul General, actually in Hong Kong, found out that one of my superiors was often drunk on the job and not really performing and said, "Why didn't you come to me?" Stu, I just don't know. When do you go rat on your boss?

Q: It is a major problem and there is no real answer because you are damned if you do and damned if you don't.

CARSON-YOUNG: Part of it makes me angry because I thought in both these cases, if you, Mr. DCM or supervisor, ever bothered to come down to the consular section, you would have perhaps known that this was going on. But it is so often the case that the Ambassador, the DCM, the person that I report to, really doesn't have any idea what is going on in my section.

Q: How did this non-immigrant problem sort itself out, or did it?

CARSON-YOUNG: Mr. White's girlfriend was an Anglo-Indian whom he lived with, on the U.S. compound. She was given a visa, but again, not by me. She went to the United States. She had a letter of recommendation as a housekeeper written on Embassy stationery and signed by Mr. White. She went to work for a woman in Maryland. This woman apparently knew something about immigration law, because she wrote the Department and said, "I don't really understand this. This woman was recommended by somebody in the Embassy, but she isn't really an experienced housekeeper. She doesn't work, makes long distance calls on my phone to Mr. White back in India. I am wondering what is going on."

This letter was received in the embassy mail room, and as a matter of routine, routed to Mr. White to answer. The Indian employee who opened the mail in our section brought it to me and said, "What do we do about this?" I said, "You give it to Mr. White. I am not going to intervene." But apparently someone in the Department had also contacted the front

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office, because I was later asked about the letter. As a result, I went through the previous visa applications for the period of time in question. I knew that the woman had gone to the United States, although I only heard about it after she left. I never did find an application. But after this inquiry, Mr. White produced an application form. I could tell that it was after the fact, because the photograph showed the woman with her hair cut short, which was after she went to the United States. So I am sure they had communicated and he said, "Look I have to get something in the file to show that the visa was properly issued." He had obviously come in and just stamped the visa, without any application. She then came back to India, I assumed at his request, but things were already on track. An inspection was imminent. The front office just decided that it was time for Mr. White to go, and he was allowed to resign.

So that was my first two years in the Foreign Service. Two fraud rings, the immigrant side and NIV side.

Q: What happened the second two years?

CARSON-YOUNG: The second two years was with a different supervisor, a woman who was well experienced in consular work. It was a much different scene, although extremely busy. I think if anybody asked me what the main problem is in consular work, it is being asked to do more with less. Not just due to the recent budget crunch, but for 20 years I have been told to "do more with less." I like to say I was replaced by two men when I left Delhi: they finally recognized the need for an additional officer to deal with increasing volume, and increasing fraud. Sadly, I have recently learned that the FSN whom I referred to as the "born detective" is now himself in jail for visa fraud in India.

Q: Looking at it in overall terms, something that I have noticed in the Virginia area is the growth of Indian population here. This was always a tremendous potential...India has lots of people who are poor. Were you feeling the multiplier effect of the ones who got into the United States...I am talking as someone who was in Korea. I was in Korea at the time

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that the multiplier effect started. GI wives went over, but all of a sudden the people were sending for relatives and it was just booming. Was this happening then?

CARSON-YOUNG: Have you heard the phrase "The motel Patels?"

Q: No.

CARSON-YOUNG: Patel is a very common, Gujarati, Indian family name and it is an example of how Indian society works. They work together, for their families, and their villages and extended family. The original Patel, I don't know who that was, but he managed to come to the United States, get together enough money and buy a motel. He then petitioned for a family member to come and manage the motel because he needed an assistant who spoke Gujarati, and he listed other required qualities that he knew his cousin had. Then he sold the motel to the cousin, and that began the chain. It had proliferated to the point that when my present husband and I were driving across the United States in 1984, stopping in motels wherever we ended up for the night, it quite often would be a person of Indian origin behind the desk. I would say, "Is your name Patel?" Quite often the response was affirmative.

I found that this sort of cooperation, or collusion, lacking in the case of Romanians. (My last actual assignment was in Romania.) The Romanians reflect years of suspicion and fear, not only under the communists but for centuries. They have not on the whole, been a cohesive sort of society. They don't help each other. With Indians it is almost always the case that if one "makes it," in the U.S., then they will try to bring the rest of the family and extended family and even village members to join them.

Q: I found that Romanian experience reflected pretty much in my five years in Belgrade with the Yugoslavs. It would be within the family, but not much beyond that.

The second two years would have been when to when?

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CARSON-YOUNG: That was 1976-78.

Q: How did you find as far as our immigrant laws dealing with Indians... sometimes you have these laws made up by American lawmakers and plunked down into a completely different society...did they mesh?

CARSON-YOUNG: Actually the Indians had great advantages because there are many of them who are very well-educated. At that time we were processing doctors, scientists and teachers quite readily. And actually Fifth Preference under the old law, for brothers and sisters of citizens, was current. So the pattern of going as a student, becoming a scientist or an engineer, putting in your resident time and then petitioning for all of your siblings, was very common at that time. But they changed the U.S. immigration law during the time I was in India so that doctors had a more difficult time. We tried to process the many doctors who had already qualified, before the cut-off date.

In the waiting room in New Delhi, everyone was mashed in together, immigrant and non-immigrant. I remember I told one young man that he would not be receiving the student visa that he sought and he fainted at the window. I had 11 doctors waiting for immigrant visas, jump to take care of him.

Q: With this heavy work load and all, did you feel it was doing things to you?

CARSON-YOUNG: It is just terribly stressful. We are playing God. We are making decisions that affect people's lives. Before I went to India, they gave me a mace can to keep in my desk drawer, in case a visa applicant became violent.

Q: A mace can contains liquid which you squirt into somebody's eyes and it knocks him out, or something.

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes. In those days, we interviewed at desks in an office. In fact, the counter-type interview was mandated during the time I was in India, and I was just

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thunderstruck. I said that I was not a postal clerk and was not going to sit on a stool. But, of course, it is a more efficient way of conducting large numbers of interviews.

In any case, I had the mace can in my drawer for four years and never used it. I never had anyone become violent. But I had grown men cry. I had men bring in their fathers to testify for them, men in their forties. And you know, at that time Mrs. Gandhi was very important. The official Indian attitude was very anti-American, and they talked about the "brain drain." And it was quite true. We were processing a significant number of doctors and scientists as U.S. immigrants. But it seemed really ironic to me that when the phone would ring, I would be on the visa line and just grab the phone and be talking and reviewing documents at the same time, it would often be Mrs. Gandhi's office calling to say "What did you mean? The Minister's relative must be granted the visa."

Ambassador William Saxbe who was a former Attorney General, former Senator, was one of the three different Ambassadors that I served under, in India. He used to tell the story that whenever he called on a Cabinet member they inevitably stated quite proudly that they had sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, resident in the United States. When the President of India died, this was during the Carter Administration, and Ms. Lillian, the President's mother, was leader of the official delegation...

Q: She had been a Peace Corps volunteer in her sixties.

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes, for the funeral, two of the Indian President's three children came on Air Force One with Ms. Lillian. They were permanent residents of the United States. The third came from Britain, where he was a resident. So even the very important people in India will often have children who are permanent residents elsewhere. The opportunities abroad are often greater.

During this time that I feel I had gotten so righteous about visa applicants, I decided there were certainly some who had come back, however. I had friends who were doctors and scientists and educated people who had studied abroad and returned to India. So I

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decided that I would do a little informal survey myself and ask “Why did you come back?” I asked at parties, and other social occasions, so it wouldn't appear to be official (which it, of course, wasn't). Some of the reasons given, especially by the medical people, was that life was easier, you could live more comfortably in India, you could have servants, a big house, you didn't have the pressures of life overseas. But the most common thread was, “My father would not permit me (to remain abroad).” So I decided the real question I ought to ask at the interview window was, “How heavy is your father? Will your father let you stay?”

Q: Then you left India and went where?

CARSON-YOUNG: Hong Kong.

Q: You were there for four years from 1978-82?

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes. I was actually American Citizens Officer in Hong Kong and had an extremely interesting time. The Consulate at that time was filled with China Watchers. Their focus was on the Mainland and, of course, there was and is now this huge interesting business community. Because American citizens services are not limited to the destitute, and I had a legitimate reason to know as many as possible, I started going to Chamber of Commerce luncheons. I got to know many of the business people. I became a member of the only overseas branch, at that time, of the League of Women Voters. Working with the League, I was very active in a U.S. program for the 1980 elections, and was on local television promoting the idea of democracy, the responsibility to vote So I had quite an interesting, but essentially non-visa experience.

Q: What were your main problems and issues that you had to deal with?

CARSON-YOUNG: It was relatively uncomplicated compared to India. We had certainly the drug-related arrests, but the prisons were well run, the officials were uncorrupted, so jail visits and drug problems were not as complicated. And, of course, the geographical

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area was much smaller, so it was easier to make these visits. Persons qualifying as citizens became one of the main items of interest for me. We recognized China during the time I was there. The Chinese are experts in using our citizenship laws in order to emigrate. I think that at FSI, probably even now, when they are demonstrating citizenship fraud, they use a photograph of a Chinese family as an example. If you count the heads and the number of feet, they don't match up, because some heads have been pasted in, in order to establish a fraudulent family member's claim to status.

During the Chinese cultural revolution, many documents were destroyed. But one thing the Chinese are reluctant to do is to destroy photographs. And they take many family pictures. In Hong Kong I had a former Chinese national employee who had actually been the one to close out Shanghai in 1948. He was Fred Tao, a very dapper little gentleman, in his sixties, I think at that time. He was my citizenship expert. Many of the people of Chinese origin born in the United States in the early 1900s went back to China as children. They were now elderly, newly able to come out of China. Most of their documents had been destroyed. Even if they had a birth certificate, how did we know that this was the same person? They were wanting to go to the U.S. in order to qualify their children to go. These elderly people, I think, did not really intend to remain in the United States, but they were eligible to go if they were citizens. So they tried, through photographs, to establish that they were the same person who left California as a baby, and were U.S. citizens by birth.

Fred Tao was my expert on photographs. He said, "If you will notice, the nostrils and the earlobes do not change." And apparently that is the reason for the three/quarter view for immigration photographs. The ear is a very distinctive feature. A baby's ear and an old man's ear will be the same shape. I think there were probably lots of people who assumed we had records and archives and computerized ways of checking, when in fact I would just take a photograph to Fred Tao and he would check out the nostrils and the ears. He would say, "Yeah, it is okay," and we would often issue the passport on this basis.

Q: After this assignment you went to Mexico.

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CARSON-YOUNG: Yes. I was not in Mexico City, however. I was the Principal Officer in Merida, which is one of our smallest consulates, if not the very smallest. There were only two Foreign Service officers there, myself and a junior officer. A most fun and interesting experience. Honestly, I believe that experience in a sense showed me what the Foreign Service ought to be. When you are the Principal Officer and you do everything, there is no compartmentalizing: no this is the political officer's job, this is the ECON officer's job...because it all flows together. And that is the way, in my opinion, it is supposed to be. But at a big Embassy it's not like that. It can't be, of course. In Merida, I did a lot of reporting. In fact, I was given the opportunity to report directly to Washington. I did not send my cables through Mexico City for clearance. I did a lot of commercial reporting, political, whatever. It was me. Some of my very best contacts, I obtained through a visa interview.

Q: How would that work?

CARSON-YOUNG: Example. There was a Belgian engineer who worked for a Houston oil firm. His job was to supervise repairing of the off-shore drilling facilities in the Bay of Campeche. Seventy percent of Mexico's offshore oil comes from that bay. That was in my consular district. The Mexican government was not always forthcoming in letting us know where their facilities were, how much they were pumping, etc. So this man came in and his Belgian visas were due to expire. I talked to him at length and told him to bring his family in at any time to see me. I would take care of it quickly, no problem. Then we began to talk. When I learned what he was doing, I asked where the facilities that he worked on were located. (Previously, Mexico hadn't repaired anything. During the oil boom days they just ordered new replacements.) I saw at some of the oil facilities that I did visit, just lots of equipment rusting under the sun because they had not bothered to use it. But by the 1980s, they had to repair facilities because it was less expensive to repair than it was to buy new items. The Belgian engineer said, "Would you like my map?" I said, "Oh, I

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certainly would." I sent it in to the Department and my understanding is that it became the bible for the Economic Bureau's oil-related economic reports.

What I am trying to say is that at an Embassy where everyone had his own job, I might have met this man at the visa counter, but I wouldn't have had (1) time to talk to him about anything more than the basic visa necessities, and (2) would not, perhaps, have known that the ECON section was interested in the information he could provide.

Q: What was the situation, political and economic in this area, which was basically the Yucatan Peninsula?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, my consular district included four provinces. They were Yucatan, Campeche, Quintana Roo and Tabasco. It is an area that is very pro-American, even at a time when Mexico as a whole was not. Yucatan tried to join the United States twice in the last century. Their request was defeated by just one vote, I think, just prior to the Civil War. They wanted to come in as a free state and were defeated by the Southern lobby. Ironically, they were much closer in their economy and social situation, having henequen plantations and Indian laborers, to the Southern side than the Northern side. In any case, the residue of goodwill is very strong, even though they were rejected for U.S. statehood.

Merida is an old Spanish-style city, one of the early ones. The courtyard, the cathedral, the governor's mansion are all very picturesque and charming. It is twenty miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

The other provinces that were part of my consular district included resorts in the Cancun and Cozumel area. I had Guatemalan refugees in two out of four of my provinces.

Commercial interests and trade were becoming very important. Yucatan had initially become rich on henequen, from which rope is made. I think the major part of the world's rope came from the Yucatan up through World War II. But at that point, Tanzania, Brazil and other countries began producing it more cheaply. In addition, synthetics became

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much more utilized. But natural fiber rope is still important, especially in the dairy industry, because those stupid cows will eat anything. If you wrap up the hay with synthetic rope, they will just eat it and then eventually die. It is indigestible. So there is still a market for henequen.

There were fortunes made in the heyday of henequen. It was interesting to see that by the early '80s something like three percent of the population of Merida, which is the major city in the whole Peninsula, was of Lebanese descent. But this ethnic group controlled 60 percent of the wealth. It was beginning to be acceptable for the old, Spanish Yucatan families to intermarry with the Lebanese.

Three out of four of the governors of my provinces had national aspirations. Interesting, different personalities. I traveled, got to know the officials and the people in all four provinces, quite personally. I felt really tuned in to the community.

When I left Romania, which was my last actual assignment, and people say, "Well, I imagine the Romanian revolution was the high point of your career." I usually say "Yes," because I was in Romania when they asked.

But actually, one Fourth of July in Merida, the Governor of Yucatan attended the consulate celebration. This was the first time a governor had attended the Fourth of July event in several years. (In spite of the overt friendliness to the U.S., I think there were official instructions that said you had to be somewhat cool towards the official day.) In any case, this was the first time he had come. I had been in Merida for two years.

I decorated with red, white and blue crepe paper Mexican flowers, had the "Star Spangled Banner" on a little portable recorder, had fireworks set up in the front yard. I pushed the button on the recorder just when the fireworks went off. My Spanish is not excellent, and I spoke extemporaneously. The speech was far from grammatically perfect. But I made a little joke, a play on words. The Governor had been trying to find a way to extend his term, because in Mexico you cannot be reelected to the same position. He had been appointed

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to the job so he was trying to "prorogar" or extend his term. So I started my remarks by saying, "I have served two years in Yucatan and I like it so much, I have been able to 'prorogar' my assignment. Then I paused, and said, "That is a word I learned here." There was total silence. Then a moment, when I think people were saying, "Did she say what I think she said?" Then a swell of laughter, the governor joining in. Well, the idea that you can say something amusing in a foreign language and have it appreciated, was wonderful. The governor, who spoke no English, told me later he wanted to learn an American word! Re-election.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the Peninsula, because it is really more than one province, really was at odds with at least part of the Mexican policy at the time which was not very forthcoming to the United States?

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes. People in Yucatan used to talk about going to Mexico when they meant going to Mexico City. They would much rather go to Miami. It was closer, for one thing. They felt very much at home there. I found it interesting; when I was doing visa interviews after Hong Kong...and, of course, the Chinese are always planning into the next generation, so we had friends in Hong Kong who were deliberately planting a child, a nephew, or someone in Canada, Australia, the United States, thinking of 1997 when who knows what will happen.

Q: That is when Hong Kong is supposed to revert to China.

CARSON-YOUNG: And even in 1980, for the Chinese, 1997 was not that far away.

So I was in Yucatan and talked to a visa applicant who wanted to take his family to Disney World. I asked, "But you are spending half of your salary to go to Disney World?" I thought to myself, "I know you are going there to work." And I was wrong. No, he really was spending half a year's salary to go to Disney World. He said, "Well, if I don't go this year it will just cost more next year." Manana to people like this was "never." They would borrow the money to have a pleasurable vacation. Whereas the Chinese will save their

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money and scrimp, for the future of the next generation. I don't like generalizations about nationalities—but it was interesting to see how often they were reflected in Mexican and Chinese attitudes.

Q: Our Ambassador in Mexico at that time was John Gavin who was sort of interesting. He was a former movie actor and a wheel in the Reagan Republican Party. What was your impression of him and his connection to the Yucatan?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, he never came to Yucatan while I was there. He made a point to visit all of the Mexican Consulates, but he had come to Merida before I got there and he didn't come back during my four years. So for me, it was to see John Gavin as an observer. I would come into Mexico City usually every six weeks or so. I found him certainly charming and I think he was an effective ambassador, in a lot of ways. But he was merciless with the Foreign Service and during the first two years I was there, I would go into Mexico City and would learn whose head had most recently fallen.

My understanding was that Gavin came with two hand-picked assistants. One came from a law firm in California, and one had formerly been a Foreign Service officer. Gavin liked him and brought him back in. In any case, either one or both of these people, according to common wisdom, were whispering in his ear and telling him that the career Foreign Service was out to get him, was undependable, incompetent, etc.

Gavin is a very precise person. The story was that he had a photograph on his desk with everything in place and this was provided to the cleaning ladies so that they would put everything right back in place. He didn't like the carpets in his office and had them taken up and the floor sanded, then didn't like the color and had it sanded again. The story was that the fourth floor was going to come crashing down into the third, if he did it one more time. He expected that precise performance from his people. Towards the end, (he was there four years, of which only three coincided with the time I was in Merida), these assistants were gone, and he had become more used to our system. I think, like many

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political appointees, he came to appreciate what the Foreign Service could do. And in my experience, no one deliberately tries to make a political appointee look bad. On the contrary, we try to make them look good.

Q: This was the sort of court thing with the two, I think they are called the palace guard or palace dogs, who sort of keep people...became quite notorious. As a matter of fact in one of my interviews, I think it was Tony Motley, who was a political appointee, but the Assistant Secretary for ARA apparently said, I think...called Gavin in and said, "You can't do this any more as far as priority people. You become the laughing stock of the diplomatic service. You have to learn to live with people."

CARSON-YOUNG: At one point, when he couldn't get rid of one of his officers, I think it was the administrative counselor, he wouldn't allow him to attend staff meetings. That was really petty. But, as I say, to be in a consulate and one that had no real significance...on the grand scale, nobody was interested in Merida...so I could do really just about what I wanted to, as long as I didn't screw up. It was sort of my domain. I could go into Mexico City and talk to my colleagues there, and meet with Gavin and get at least a smidgen of personal attention, without that fear that it was going to be my head that rolled the next time.

Q: What about the problems of Americans? You covered one of the big resort centers. A lot of Americans must have been around. How did you deal with that?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, a lot of my attention was diverted to tourism problems in Cancun, especially. I had a wonderful consular agent there. I think that is an unsung, unpaid aspect of our Service. There are nine, I think, consular agents, in Mexico. More than in any other country. I had two different agents during the time I was in Merida, both of them just especially capable women who were on the job sometimes in the middle of the night, 12 or 15 hours a day, etc. With hundreds of U.S. visitors there, we had lots of problems. We had a lot of credit card fraud, for one thing. Arrests for all sorts of misdemeanors. It wasn't just

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drugs. People were attracted by a resort like that, and under the mistaken idea that their credit cards couldn't be checked in a foreign country.

I remember, I was in Merida at one point and heard the vice consul on the phone talking to a woman calling from the United States. He was saying, "Well, in what kind of place does your son usually stay?" It was obviously a welfare, whereabouts request and the vice consul was trying to pin down the sort of hotel or lodging where we could legitimately make an inquiry. He said, "Oh, he usually stays in 5-star hotels. He usually goes to first-class restaurants." I caught the name just as I walked by and said, "Wait a moment. He is in jail. Yes, he certainly does like first-class treatment, but he couldn't pay for it." I went to visit the man in jail in Cancun and he was most irate because his mother back in the United States wouldn't sell her house in order to provide him with the funds that it was going to take him to get out of jail. He said, "But you know, I like living this way and I just don't have the money for it." That seemed to be the end of his thinking.

I had one of my worst experiences in consular affairs, following a death in Cancun. It was a young couple on their honeymoon. They had rented one of those little jitney cars that are really very unsafe, and were rushing to return it on time. When the husband first called me to tell me about his wife's death, he indicated that he had been driving and had turned to get the sales slip out of his pocket, to make sure they would get in on time and had swerved when a water truck tried to pass him. The jitney car ran into a divider in the highway. The wife was thrown out of the car and killed instantly. Well, it was not only a terrible tragedy, to see this happen to a young and attractive and, it turned out, rather well-connected young couple from some place in the mid west. The girl's father and father-in-law came down. The husband was detained until he could pay damages to the water company. I can't remember just exactly what the circumstances were, but in any case it was a matter of getting money to him to allow him to depart. They couldn't get the body out, right away, since it was a holiday. There was lots of just terrible publicity coming from U.S. papers. The parents went back to the United States and reported that we had not been cooperative, when in fact we...you know there are only so many things

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you can do. The fathers were very critical of the morgue, the hospital, the jail and the facilities in Cancun. But especially of the consulate's assistance. And that is something that some people don't realize, but it is a resort city, built as a resort, so it doesn't have the infrastructure and facilities that other cities might have.

We had diving deaths too. People who were attracted to that gorgeous water and the inexpensive scuba diving and Mexico's rather loose requirements. In the United States in order to scuba dive, you had to have so many hours of instruction, etc. But in Cancun they would take people down 50, 60 feet after only one or two hours of instruction. One young American drowned in 15 feet of water. The instructor took out just too many people, and couldn't keep an eye on all of them. That just shouldn't have happened. Another, older man, had a heart attack when he went down too deep after just having eaten. So there were tragic things that happened. The cruise ships would come into Cozumel, and that would spill a couple of hundred people on shore on any given day, in a place that is also rather primitive outside of the tourist hotels. They use these little moped bikes to run around, and sometimes do a lot of drinking. Sometimes, results are fatal.

Q: Just to get a feel for the time, when you had this case of the young married couple, and the parents were raising hell, how did the Department support you on that?

CARSON-YOUNG: Wonderfully. That was the one thread that I clung to because I had never gotten such personal bad publicity. (Since then, if we want to get into adoptions in Romania, maybe I have.) The consular agent was, in fact, in Merida for a Fourth of July party, so wasn't actually there. However, I sent her back immediately when we heard about the death. She and I did everything possible to assist. I must say there was nothing that was not supportive that came out of the Department in that particular case.

Q: Then you left Merida and went to Bucharest. You served in Bucharest from when to when?

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CARSON-YOUNG: From 1987-91, four years again.

Q: During probably the most interesting period in Romanian history.

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, my first two years in Romania were probably the worst of the Ceausescu years. He was, of course, the dictator and communist leader of Romania until the revolution in 1989. Then two years afterward, I was there to see a nation that had been under this very strict, brutal terrorist rule for 40 years, struggle to become democratic and maybe not so democratic. It was an interesting time.

Q: When you went there how were you prepared for this?

CARSON-YOUNG: This is also a story I am a little embarrassed about. You notice I move from continent to continent, bureau to bureau in my career. So after I had gone from NEA to EA to ARA, I thought I would like to go back to Europe. I had been in Germany with my former husband, and I did not think I could handle returning there. But my present husband, who was an immigration officer in Hong Kong and had married in Mexico, had never been to Europe. So, during that last year, when I was thinking of bidding on assignments, I had Europe in mind. They called from the Department and said, "Do we have a job for you." Well, that should tell you...when they call you. My whole idea of Eastern Europe was of terrible languages, gray countries, lace curtains at the window. I was not interested in Eastern Europe at all. They said, "Oh no, it is a Romance language. [which of course, Romanian is, it is based on Latin]. We need someone who is sensitive to the political situation," they said.

Q: That is known as the hard sell.

CARSON-YOUNG: To my shame I went home...I knew so little about that area...and said, "Don, they want me to go to Bucharest. I think that is where the good guy is." You know, Ceausescu had gotten a very good press when it appeared he resisted Soviet authority,

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and had sent a delegation to the '84 Olympics. All that had registered with me was that maybe he wasn't so bad. So on that firm knowledge, I said, "We'll go."

Q: Ceausescu turned out to be one of the real monsters.

CARSON-YOUNG: I think he was right up there with Stalin.

Q: How did you find the situation when you arrived there?

CARSON-YOUNG: Very repressive society. Actually, in the consular section we had the one area that was open to the Romanians. Some of them were so desperate that they would defy the security police to come in and beg for some kind of refugee consideration. We were processing people who qualified for a unique refugee program that had been established just in Romania, I believe in 1975 at the time that we were trying to encourage Ceausescu to be independent from the Soviet Union.

Q: Nixon was making a big push towards Romania, wasn't he?

CARSON-YOUNG: Most Favored Nation status was granted to Romania during the Nixon administration, or was in the process of being granted. But then came the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which stated that a country to be eligible for MFN must permit free immigration. So Ceausescu then said, "Okay, here are the people, they are free to go." What our Congress and officials in this country never said, (and we are seeing the results of that in the Soviet Union now) was that they wanted people free to emigrate, but only the people that we can accept under our law would be admitted into the U.S. Romanians had not traditionally been immigrants to the United States, so we did not have the family relationships established, with a pull factor from this country that would bring in relatives. Virtually none of the people allowed to depart Romania qualified under our immigration laws. Because we wanted to grant MFN status, to make a point, we created third-country refugee processing (which was a misnomer. To qualify as a refugee, one

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would normally have to be in a third country and establish that you have a well-founded fear of persecution, if you were obliged to return to your own country).

Q: The meaning of a third country. You are in Romania as a consular officer and the person from a third country would have to be from some place that was not America or Romania. That is what the third country means.

CARSON-YOUNG: Until the Refugee Act of 1980, to qualify as a refugee, all you had to do was to flee communism. So, a Romanian who could get to Germany, Italy, etc. would have automatically qualified as a refugee. But, of course, most of them couldn't get out. They were not granted exit papers and there were security police along the border. People were shot trying to swim the Danube to get to Yugoslavia. So creating this special "refugee" program was used by both sides, because we used it as well as Ceausescu, in the political public relations wars.

In any case, the program started in the seventies, when it was sort of the golden time in Romania, with people somewhat optimistic about a loosening up and reform in the country. People could just come in the consulate and sign up for the TCP program. I must say, the consulate's processing...we apparently had very few guidelines. This was a very unique program. So there apparently were no qualifications, other than just come in and sign your name. The records at the time were rather haphazardly kept, it seemed to me. Of course, I came in many years later and I don't really know.

By the time I got there, the Refugee Act of 1980 had established that maybe these people didn't automatically qualify as refugees any more, because after 1980 you not only had to be fleeing from communism, but you had to establish that you feared persecution or had been persecuted on the basis of political belief, ethnic background, race, creed, sex, etc. So they reduced, and then eliminated the TCP program.

At the time I got there in 1987, the TCP program was being phased out. As of 1983-84, the U.S. government said "All of those presently registered with us, if they can get passports

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to leave, they will be processed, but we are taking no new names.” However, there was so much pressure that dates sort of crept up, the deadline was extended. By the time I got there, if you had registered before January 1, 1986, you could still be processed. Well, there were still several thousand people who could be processed but who couldn't get passports to leave the country. At the same time, there were probably three thousand people to whom Ceausescu had given passports but who weren't registered with us and didn't qualify under even our generous refugee policy. They did not meet usual immigration requirements.

So it was a constant battle. I would go to the Foreign Office every month with my list and say, “Let these people go.” Then they would present me with their list and say, “Why won't you take these other people; it is their human right to go?” They would try to bash us on human rights because we weren't taking the people that they were allowing to go.

Q: Who were the people they wanted to go?

CARSON-YOUNG: There was some discussion that they were trying to push off their criminals, the insane and useless, in a “little Mariel” operation similar to what the Cubans had done. But actually when I compared statistics between their list and our list, it appeared to be simply arbitrary, a ploy on their part. There really wasn't much of a pattern to the refugees from Romania. The difference between people who got passports, and those who didn't, was so much of it personal. Did somebody in your village have a grudge against you? Okay, you didn't get a passport, no matter what. Did the passport official have a brother-in-law who bought your cheese and gave you eggs under the table, etc. and therefore owed you something? Then you did get a passport. There was so much personal and local politics involved. In my opinion, there were no mass movements for anybody in particular. I started making studies of the people who qualified as refugees, including those who came in to see us at the consulate. There was a high percentage of people who were not the well-educated, but were skilled laborers, the plumbers and electricians. Truck drivers managed to get across the border and then quite often defected.

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Q: It was relatively easy wasn't it?

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes.

Q: Who was the Ambassador there?

CARSON-YOUNG: Roger Kirk was the Ambassador when I first arrived. He had been there for two years before I came, and stayed another two years while I was there. Then he was replaced by a political appointee, Alan Green, Jr. from Oregon, my home state.

Q: What was your impression of our attitude when you first arrived, obviously things changed, but what were we after and how did we deal with the Ceausescu government?

CARSON-YOUNG: To be honest, during pre-revolution times I think there was a certain element of apology. Yes, Ceausescu was a terrible person and there was terrible repression, but Romania did follow our lead in some aspects. I can't put my finger on an example, but there was, it seems to me, a tendency to say, "Well, it is bad, they don't do things right, but on some of our foreign policy programs they are with us."

Q: He is a son of a bitch, but our son of a bitch. This has been an accusation that has been made. This one sort of bubbled up and became quite prominent. But during the Cold War we would tend to look upon people who were sort of being nasty or at least not overly friendly to the Soviets and say, "No matter what." We saw things in this way. There was a reason for this.

Did you see a split in the Embassy between the Ambassador and others who followed the stated policy and, perhaps junior officers and others who had more contact with the local scene?

CARSON-YOUNG: I had one rather major difference of opinion because I reported to the DCM. The DCM also was completing four years in Romania, and had served there before.

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He had negotiated a verbal, gentleman's agreement with the Ceausescu government in regard to these refugees, these TCPs. The idea was that when they qualified, when they signed up to be a potential refugee, then applied for a passport, their benefits in Romania were gone. In fact, if it were known that they had a relative in the West they lost jobs, housing, were banished off to some remote area. Passport applications normally took from two to five years to be processed. So this left people and families just in limbo.

So the DCM had negotiated with the Romanians, and there had been people from the Department go out and discuss this, to establish that Romania would not deny its citizens the privilege of holding a job or receiving housing until the passport was actually issued. My boss, the DCM, believed Romania was living up to that agreement. Well, it was his (the DCM's) agreement, so he had a personal stake in it. I arrived there and said, "You know, they are not. They aren't issuing the passports until the very end, that is true. But they are denying the privileges at the time that Romanians make the application."

At one point I even had about 50 people who were willing to stand up and be counted, would openly acknowledge their situation. Most of them, when they came in to say they had lost their job and all benefits, I asked if I could report this to the front office as an example, and they would say no, in fear of worse things being done to them by their government. They didn't want their names used. But in my second year, I had enough people who figured they had already lost so much that they couldn't lose much more, and I could use the names. With front office concurrence, I turned in the list to the Foreign Ministry. A particularly obnoxious person I had to deal with in the Foreign Ministry, the Consular Affairs Director, then said that he wanted 30 days to check the list. Then he called me and the DCM into his office. He was really quite insulting. He said that I was an emotional female who naturally would be taken in by these stories, but his government had checked each case and the individuals' statements were untrue. My boss indicated that he believed this.

Q: Who was your boss?

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CARSON-YOUNG: His name was Henry Clark. After being DCM in Bucharest he became the economic counselor in Tel Aviv. He is now ambassador to Uzbekistan. I believe that my statements were vindicated, after the revolution. It was quite clear that the Romanian government had indeed persecuted people who were interested in immigration.

I kept pushing to include in the TCP program, as it wound down, the people who had been cut off by the 1986 date. Anyone who had qualified during the period of time between 1986 and the revolution in 1989 should still qualify as a refugee. I remember, I went to Henry Clark in 1988 and said, "I believe they are still refugees and they have suffered, etc." He said, "No." He was a very strict constructionist as far as refugee status was concerned. He said, "No, they aren't really politically motivated." He sort of implied that I was being taken in by those sad stories, too. Finally I said, "Well, I guess they are just miserable." Well, the name stuck, and "the miserales" became a group of about 3,000 people that I lobbied for, and eventually in 1991 established a special program and processed more than half as refugees to this country.

My biggest battle was with my own front office. Henry and Roger were somewhat sympathetic, but did not agree on widening the TCP program. When Punch Green came, he and Larry Napper, the DCM who followed Henry Clark, were more sympathetic. Punch Green, to his credit, lent his authority to my request for numbers, a specified number not to exceed 3,000 people. INS fought it. They were not happy at having any more refugees. But with enough pressure, they agreed that they would send in INS officers to interview these people in Bucharest. So that is the way it worked out. We had about a 70-80 percent approval rate from INS, so I feel that that was one of my accomplishments... maybe for good or ill, I don't know. My understanding is that Romanians do not necessarily adapt well to life in the United States. But, at least, I know that because I believed it was right and was tenacious, I gave these people the opportunity out.

Q: How did the events of the revolution impact on you?

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CARSON-YOUNG: I remember the day of the Ceausescu speech that was the beginning of the end. The square where he spoke was very near the consulate. The consulate was in a separate building from the Chancery, but in the same block. We were closest to the Intercontinental Hotel and the square where he was speaking. I remember that morning, we saw people going toward the square with the usual banners. There had already been news that there had been disturbances in the city of Timisoara on the 16th of December. By this day, it was the 21st of December. I remember commenting to my staff, questioning them how these people could go and chant and raise their pro-Ceausescu signs as they always had, considering what had happened in the extreme Western part of the country.

Q: There had been highly exaggerated reports about thousands being killed.

CARSON-YOUNG: Not as many casualties as reported at first, but in effect it was the first overt opposition. There had been a strike in Brasov in November of 1987, but basically the events in Timisoara were the first time that anyone had really openly defied the regime. It was reported on VOA and RFE, which surprisedly were not jammed coming into Romania, so people were fairly well informed, even though there was nothing on local radio or television. In fact, all of the Tiananmen Square events in China might as well not have happened, if you were depending on Romanian news or television. They just didn't cover it.

Then on December 21, in Bucharest, we saw the crowd surging back in the other direction and we heard some explosions from the square. The embassy security officer ordered the consulate closed and doors locked. I had about a dozen visa applicants who were still in the waiting room. There were maybe 8 or 10 Romanian employees, and I think two other Americans, and myself still in the building. We just didn't know what was happening. The Romanians, of course, were quite tense and fearful. We had a consulate Christmas tree that we had not decorated, so in order to pass the time and keep people calm I said, "Let's

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decorate the tree.” I was talking to a friend afterwards and said, “In the movie of my life, this is the time I am going to be played by Ingrid Bergman.”

We went home that night, but came in the next morning to hear that there had been many deaths in the square during the night. Troops had used tanks to run people down. Nobody was sure what was happening, but the common wisdom was convinced there would be massive repression. It was the next day that Ceausescu tried to escape by helicopter from the Party Headquarters Building. He reached his summer home; took off by car and after that was apprehended. The revolution was under way.

The Embassy evacuated volunteer officers and their dependents. Then they made departure mandatory and cut the embassy to what was supposed to be a bare bones operation. That meant that my husband was evacuated. In fact, there were three women whose jobs were considered essential and whose husbands were sent home. Don, my husband spent the remainder of the revolution in Southern California and I spent it sleeping on the floor at the Chancery. We who were left remained in the building. We were lucky, in that there was a small commissary that was supplied through a support flight from Frankfurt once every second month. We had just had a support flight early in December, so we did have food and water right there on the compound. There were about 20 of us who stayed.

As things became calmer, the Ambassador used his armored car to send us home to have showers, change clothes and just get away from it all for a couple of hours, and then return. I have a couple of bullet shells that were lobbed into my terrace door. Our house was near the television station which was the scene of some very hard fighting, that first night after Ceausescu had left. Nobody knew where he was. The thought was that he was regrouping and coming back. There were all kinds of rumors. He had security forces that they said included orphans that had been taken as children and trained as an attack force; they said that he had Arab students who had been studying in Romania, but were really

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terrorists. People were very suspicious and fearful, especially when they observed dark, Arab-looking men.

Q: These stories were prevalent everywhere.

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes.

Q: Well, what were you doing? The Embassy was down to a hard core, but what were you doing?

CARSON-YOUNG: We were on the phone to Washington a lot of the time. My particular job was locating American citizens and reporting back to their families that they were all right, or not all right. We did not think we had very many Americans in Bucharest or in Romania on any given date prior to the revolution. Americans certainly did not come there readily as tourists. There was a geriatric specialist, a woman, who was quite well known in Europe. She had developed a special anti-aging treatment. There were some elderly Americans who still came to see her and were resident at a hotel in a compound which she operated. There would be the occasional American citizen passing through. We didn't realize that even in the Ceausescu days, Romanian-Americans still went back to visit families. We would have thought not, that they would have been too afraid, and many were, but there were many more who came than we expected. Then, of course, with the revolution, journalists came pouring in, and other interested bystanders. We had people come almost immediately to do surveys for possible food aid, etc.

My most dramatic story from the revolution concerns the highest ranking security officer in the Ceausescu government, whose name was Pacepa. He had defected eleven years earlier. He left a wife and a daughter behind in Romania. In 1989 the daughter was a young woman 33 or 34 years old, and married. We knew that she worked for a film animation studio, both she and her husband. Her father became quite close to Congressman Frank Wolf of Virginia and Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey. They had been pushing us to communicate with Dana Damiceanu, the daughter. We tried but

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the apartment where we believed she lived was surrounded by security officers. I would go over and just walk past every few weeks and report by cable that I thought I had seen her (judging from a photograph), and that the police were still there. I had, just before the revolution, finally called the film studio and asked for her and spoke to her on the phone, which was amazing. Her father kept saying that we had to get her out. We said that she hadn't even indicated that she wanted out. We believed there were many ways she could have gotten a message to us, but hadn't. On the phone, she said that she would like to leave but she wanted to do it legitimately, whatever that meant. She would never have gotten exit permission from the Romanian government under Ceausescu. We thought it was a moot subject and we were afraid that our attention would just make matters worse for her.

Well, came the revolution. It was four or five days after Ceausescu was assassinated, the week between Christmas and New Years in 1989. It had begun to snow. The vice consul and I walked over to the apartment where Dana was living. When we got there, there were no security police. There was an unlocked abandoned car in the courtyard. We looked inside it and saw security police jackets with typical insignia that had been abandoned. Obviously, her guards had just fled. We opened the glove compartment and there was a photograph of me, my passport picture, with my vital statistics written on the other side. They had obviously been watching out for me as I came strolling by.

We went into the building. The vice consul was Gordon Helwig, who at that time had a beard and a mustache. Another couple that was sort of maintaining watch on Dana's behalf was very suspicious. There were all these stories of Arabs loose in the country. They decided we were okay and we went inside. We went up the back stairs into a very warm apartment, one that was quite adequately furnished. Dana's parents-in-law were there. In a few moments, a young woman burst out of her room, came and threw her arms around me and said, "I have been waiting eleven years for this time."

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So, then we made arrangements for her to talk to her father. The next day we went over to pick her up, walked over in the snow, brought her into the Chancery and placed a long distance call to her father. I have photographs of this gathering. I was aware it was a moment in history. I was prepared for some made-for-TV emotional moments. To my surprise it was, "Daddy, you have to do this and this for me, and you know Chelac, who is now the Foreign Minister, he is your old friend, so he can help." It was a real nuts-and-bolts conversation. No tears, no overt sentiment expressed.

Congressmen Wolf and Smith were the embassy's first Congressional visitors after the revolution. They came the 2nd or 3rd of January. We managed to work with the new provisional government and persuaded them to issue passports to all four members of Pacepa's family—his daughter, her husband and parents-in-law. I was the control officer for the Congressmen and took them over to meet the family. The family and the Congressmen left Romania together, two days later. There was a moment at the airport when, after all of this time, the daughter was finally going to join her father in the United States. As she was leaving for the runway, she came running back to me and said, "Take care of my mother," and then left. I thought, "Oh, my goodness, am I going to have to go through this all over again?" But the mother never contacted us. Actually the father had remarried in the United States and had divorced the mother. So I never heard anything further from any of them.

Q: What happened visa-wise in your next two years?

CARSON-YOUNG: One word: adoptions.

Q: Could you explain what the context was?

CARSON-YOUNG: We had four pending adoption cases at the time of the Romanian revolution. Ceausescu had allowed foreign adoptions in Romania but the numbers were few. In early 1987, he terminated all foreign adoptions. So, we had people who had

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identified children prior to 1987. One couple in particular came back every year to visit their child. To my astonishment, the Romanians allowed the child to be with the adoptive parents for a couple of weeks in Romania, but wouldn't let the child leave the country. By now the child was over four years old. It was really a very emotional time. I had met with the parents on two different occasions, by the time the revolution came. Of course the parents were on the first plane to Romania. We issued an immigrant visa immediately. It was a very warm and touching scene. Actually it was filmed by 20/20.

Q: Which is a weekly news program...

CARSON-YOUNG: A weekly news program that had very high viewer ratings and I think probably it was that film that touched off the first interest in Romanian adoptions. Well, that and a documentary that also showed the deplorable conditions in Romanian orphanages. I don't think anyone in the outside world, and most people in Romania, had any idea that there were thousands of children that had literally been warehoused in Romania. They were orphanages in name only. Under the Ceausescu regime, any kind of family planning (birth control) was illegal. Couples were not only encouraged, but almost forced to have at least four or five children. Pregnant women working in factories were examined to make sure a pregnancy had not been terminated. As a result, there were many unwanted children born in Romania.

Q: What was the rationale behind this?

CARSON-YOUNG: A wish to increase the population, although why, I am not quite sure. It seems irrational. The nutrition for most of the nation was terrible. There were very poor sanitary conditions in the orphanages and no trained staff. Nobody really cared about these poor little children. Another aspect of it was the fact that there was a high rate of the HIV virus found in these institutionalized children. Romanians believed, and I think in some areas still practice, the theory that an infant who is weak or small will benefit from a blood transfusion. My understanding is that this is a total old world, old wives' tale and has no

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validity. But, particularly in the Constanta area, which is the port city, where the HIV virus was brought in...

Q: HIV refers to the virus that leads to what we call acquired immune deficiency syndrome or AIDS which is deadly.

CARSON-YOUNG: As high as 40 percent of children in institutions in that area were found to be HIV positive. Almost never was it because of an infected mother. It was because of the blood transfusion. They had no disposable needles, they had no child-size vials, so if they had a contaminated vial, it might be used on four or five different children. The virus spread rapidly.

In any case, the first televised view of Romanian adoptions for the western world was initially that of parents coming...such happy, glad scenes...to pick up the children they had been unable to take out, but had tried to adopt prior to the revolution. Except for the four cases I mentioned, they were French, Swiss, Italian citizens. They were not Americans. But the scenes were on worldwide television, and that sparked enormous interest. And, as I have since learned, adopting parents are absolutely determined, single minded. If a child is available, they will spare nothing in order to adopt him and give him a loving home, a better life.

So, the American television programs about the first couple and the happy ending to their story, and then the pitiable scenes of children in orphanages, brought people to Romania by the dozen, wishing to adopt. At that point, they were not showing the ill and infected children on TV, just poor little waifs with no family.

It turned out that a lot of these children were not literally orphans. The mothers and parents of these children had been forced to bear them, but had no means to look after them. They had placed them in an orphanage. Some intended to pick them up, later.

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There was a high percentage of gypsy children in the orphanages and among those offered directly, later, to parents for “private” adoptions. The gypsy population of Romania is interesting, in itself. They are probably the only group that successfully “worked the system” under Ceausescu. They would stand in line for food and then charge double for the item. I heard Romanians complain that this was a terrible thing, refusing to understand that one pays for service. Gypsy children would be left in an institution until they were 12, 13 or 14, old enough to help earn a living, and then parents would claim them again.

The understanding in the United States and Western Europe was that there were thousands of children in orphanages of Romania just waiting for the right family to come and choose them.

In early 1990, people began coming in quite large numbers to Romania. At one point, they were allowed entry into virtually any orphanage. They could just roam through and say, “I like that one and that one.” Then there began to be some really awful stories of almost auctions, bidding wars. Nationality was pitted against nationality and couple against couple. But, for the most part, there were plenty of children and adoptions proceeded relatively quickly.

At the Embassy, we processed them quickly as well. Under U.S. immigration law, it is the Justice Department that has the bottom line on an orphan petition. A petition must be filed and approved before the visa can be issued. The petition is normally an INS responsibility, but authority has been delegated to the consular officer, but only if the petition is “clearly approvable.” If we have any doubts, it goes back to an INS officer for final adjudication.

Well, in our case, in Bucharest the INS regional officer in Vienna, Austria, was the authority we turned to on adoption matters. I had never dealt with adoptions before. I think a lot of consular officers never do. My husband, a retired INS officer, had handled probably thousands of them in Hong Kong. Americans were adopting children from Taiwan and Korea. But, I also know other INS officers who have never dealt with adoptions.

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Anyway Bob Looney, the INS officer in Vienna, was a wonderful, thoughtful and very sympathetic person. He wanted to follow the rules, wanted to do it right, and also wanted to be generous and helpful if he could be. We worked very closely, consulting by phone and cable. He sent instructions and INS regulations and precedent cases to me. As the process went on, we began to wonder if some of these children actually qualified as orphans. Under U.S. law, a child must be literally an orphan to be adopted and brought into the United States, or the child of a sole or surviving parent who is unable to look after the child and relinquishes unequivocally, or, if there are two known parents, they must have abandoned the child prior to the adoption. INS does not have a definition of abandonment. All they have is the law that says, "Must be abandoned" and INS Board of Inquiry decisions that say what abandonment is not. Birth parents simply releasing a child to adoptive parents doesn't constitute abandonment.

We approached, more and more, a situation where a small percentage of the adoptions were not "readily approvable." Even one adoption case that the Embassy doesn't approve, just like that, has enormous repercussions. We would say, "We are not saying no, but we have to refer the case to the INS in Vienna and they have to make the decision, because it does not appear that this child was truly abandoned. There are two parents. They are still living together with several other children. It looks like sort of, a deal." We are the only country that has this "orphan" requirement. The Canadians, the British, the French, none of the major adopting nationalities in Bucharest, were running up against this particular requirement. If the Romanian authorities processed the adoption, then it was a simple procedure to come into an embassy and obtain a visa. We were the only ones who had the additional requirement. We became the bad guys.

Well, we found and INS Vienna found, that if the adopting parents had good connections in the United States...high-level Congressional or Administration contacts, etc....they would appeal to the INS Central Office and the children would be paroled into the United States. Now, there are no requirements under the U.S. Immigration Act concerning parole. The

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INS Central Office can decide that for humanitarian reasons, anybody can be paroled into the United States. Noriega, I understand, was paroled into the United States in order to...

Q: The dictator of Panama.

CARSON-YOUNG: But it seemed to me that these little children, infants for the most part, were the most unwanted children, even if they came from a so-called two-parent family, and that the parents were willingly giving them up. The children would not have any future in Romania. A high percentage of them were gypsies. People would say that you should give the Romanians first chance to adopt them. Well, Romanians would not adopt a gypsy. They have very strong feelings about that.

I came back to Washington in April, 1991. By then, our volume of adoptions was increasing twofold, threefold, fivefold, and the small percentage that was being referred back to the INS was causing us lots of grief. The press was interested, the adopting parents were furious and we were getting a lot of Congressional mail on the subject.

I thought that I was coming back to talk to INS about a quick and easy way to just apply for humanitarian parole, right away, in these cases. I went to a meeting at INS. John Adams from the Visa Office went with me, but he had another appointment, and he left. So I was the only State Department person there. I have always had very good relations with INS. My husband is a 30-year veteran and distinguished INS officer. I have always felt we (State and INS) represented two halves of the whole immigration process. So, at this meeting, INS officers questioned me about whether these children had two parents and how many of them we would find were possibly not actual orphans under the law, if we knew the truth. Our denial or referral rate was running about 3 percent. I said, "Well, half of them are still coming out of orphanages and, I believe, really meet the orphan definition. About a third of the remainder comes from a single parent, and thus meet the definition. So, it is a very small percentage of those at the present time that I think have two parents and don't really meet our definition." Someone said, "Well, if you knew the truth in all these

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cases, how many do you think you would be referring or denying?" I said, "Oh, probably about 30 percent, if we really knew."

And, Stu, I really meant it in the context of discussing mutual problems with a colleague. If we knew the truth about our NIV applicants, we would probably refuse a lot more. If we knew the actual facts in an immigrant visa interview...whether the guy really had the job experience, or whether this marriage is really bona fide...it would perhaps be an additional 30 percent denial. So, that was the context of my remark.

Well, it turned out that the INS people were not interested in processing a quick and easy parole. Quite the opposite. They were facing hearings in a Congressional Judicial Subcommittee on adoptions. Just before my visit to Washington, another big television show, 60 Minutes, which is the CBS news magazine that is the most popular news show going, had done an adoption segment. I was interviewed by Leslie Stahl in my office. The whole thrust of that program was baby buying, baby selling. The commentator had gone in a black wig posing as an adopting mother into a village and actually negotiated for a child on camera. Of course, everyone in the segment discussed the idea of selling children. Obviously it was happening, although I believe it is not surprising that birth parents begin to extract something in return for giving up their children. It is reprehensible, but I don't think it was the rampant baby market that they made it out to be.

In any case, the American parents already had these children in their custody. They were legally adopted in Romania. The birth parents were not going to take them back, so why not use the parole facility?. Well, INS suspended parole. So I went back to Romania, and we had 200 American couples with babies in their arms, and the babies did not meet the initial requirements of the law. Parents had applied for parole but it was not being granted. At one point, they picketed the consulate. In fact, on one given day I had a band of my "miserables" that INS was delaying a decision on, and American parents, both demonstrating against the consulate. In both cases, it seemed to me, it was INS' fault, not ours.

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The upshot of it was that INS, at a cost of thousands and thousands of dollars, sent investigators into Romania, so that any of these cases that were deferred, instead of going on a quick basis to INS in Vienna, received a personal investigation in the country. INS sent out 7 officers, none of whom spoke Romanian, none of whom had been in the country before. They hired interpreters, rented cars and went whizzing off into different parts of the country to interview the birth mother of a given child.

Well, that didn't really prove anything very much. Even if they found that the birth mother was living with the birth father, in no case was parole ultimately denied. Over 200 cases of parole were finally approved, but after thousands of dollars, weeks of anguish and lots of bad publicity for the consulate. INS didn't get the bad publicity; by and large, it was us. In this particular case, I didn't get the support I needed and deserved from the Department and from CA.

Q: How did this lack of support manifest itself?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, the waiting room was so crowded and I said we had to have some more space. They sent a CAT team out...

Q: CAT team meaning?

CARSON-YOUNG: Consular Affairs Team. The team stayed about a day and a half and just recommended that we cut things up a little differently in the space we had. This, then, came to the fore when these American adopting parents were claiming that they had to wait outside in the rain, they couldn't get into the consulate. I asked that part of another floor in the building, that was occupied by USIS, be given to us so that we could get all the Americans inside. But I didn't get any support from my front office or the Department on that.

When there was the discussion about parole and whether these people qualified or not, and whether we were interpreting the rules correctly, the Department's Consular Affairs

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people were more sympathetic. The people in the Visa Office...there were some hardliners there who also took the INS point of view, that people are selling babies and we don't want to be a part of that. I said it was not against the law, for one thing. The law does not say anything about an exchange of goods for the child. It is morally wrong, but it is not illegal. In fact, I said that on 60 Minutes, which probably didn't endear me to anybody.

I think the final point of my frustration was reflected in the Congressional hearing. The senior Deputy Assistant Secretary represented the Assistant Secretary at the hearings. It was Jim Ward, who is a friend of mine. I have known him for years. But I really had the feeling when I saw the transcript of his remarks and the questions that were asked, that he was somewhat equivocal, and gave a "Well, I will sure look into that" kind of response. We at the embassy were not given the opportunity to provide information, except for what we volunteered. We weren't told that they might ask such and such, what information can you give? So, the hearings were really disappointing and dispiriting.

Right after that, Jim Ward came out to Bucharest with the INS "number two." They were very concerned about the situation. They lent their weight to my concern about space. Then, all of a sudden, the front office decided that the cafeteria on the ground floor would have to be evacuated, and we could use it for interview space. We were doing, during the July and August period of 1991, between 40 and 50 adoption cases every day.

I also had no additional help. I had been asking, and the DCM said, "Well, maybe we can get some volunteers, some spouses, to come in and help you." I said, "That isn't what I need. I need three contract employees to do the clerical work." But he said there wasn't any money. Well, when it hit the papers and when it was a Congressional hearing, they found the money for three contracts, and they found money to send Peter Murphy out for 90 days to help with the interviewing. So, you can tell I have some bitter feelings.

Q: And rightly so. Well, what about the medical problem with the HIV business? My understanding is that at least with the medical knowledge as it stands today, there is

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essentially no cure for somebody who has this HIV in their blood and it eventually leads to a rather long, debilitating death.

CARSON-YOUNG: And, of course, under our present law, HIV would make the child excludable. Even if the individual parent wishes to bring in an HIV-infected child, it is forbidden. I know of one case where an HIV infected child was brought in, under parole. As I say, there are no rules for parole, so anyone who can persuade the INS Central Office that this is of humanitarian interest, they can do it. I know of only one child. I was surprised that it happened. One of the things that would preclude bringing in an HIV infected child, is that you would have to either have medical insurance or a huge amount of money, because my understanding is that the average cost for treating an HIV infected person is upwards from \$100,000. And, under the law, a person—even a child—is ineligible to immigrate if it appears he or she will become a public charge.

At the time I left Romania (I don't know what finally happened), a woman who had come as a volunteer to help out in the orphanages wanted to adopt four children that she had been looking after. They were in an institution for HIV-positive children. To my surprise, her insurance company, Blue Cross, Blue Shield, wrote me a letter saying they would cover expenses, even for that. So I said we could ask for parole in this case, but asked her why, really do you want to do this? These were children 2, 3 years old and they weren't expected to live beyond age 4, at the most. She said, "Well, it would give them maybe one more year of loving care," as opposed to what they might find in the institution after she left. And, of course, they are ever-hopeful that some new discovery will come along that will prevent these children from dying. As I say, I don't know what finally happened.

Q: You left when?

CARSON-YOUNG: I left in August, 1991.

Q: What was your reception when you came back after having all the bad publicity, etc.?

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CARSON-YOUNG: People in the Department thought the crisis was over. For one thing, Romania had then passed a law that limited foreign adoptions. So the crisis was over. I was a little bit disappointed. The impression I had was that they felt the TDY officer had come over and resolved things, and I was not given the credit for being the right-down-the-middle person that I was. We had been criticized by both sides, the parents were saying we were being too strict and INS was saying we were being too lenient. I believe we had excellent interviewing officers. By June, 1991 I probably had the most knowledgeable staff on adoption-related immigration procedures of anyone in the world. I think I was responsible for keeping an even-handed approach. So it was a little disconcerting.

Then when I came back, I expected to retire in January. I returned in August and reached mandatory retirement in January, 1992. I had been asked to serve the human rights area of the Department for these last few months. But when I came back, they asked me if I would be interested in going to Lima, Peru for an interim period. I said, "Sure."

So we went to Peru. I knew there were some adoptions there, but I had not heard of any controversy. I was in a hotel, in Lima, had been there about two weeks. It was a Sunday. My husband said, "The good news is we have a Sunday newspaper. The bad news is that there is a front page article on an adoption scandal." I thought, "Oh, no, baby selling all over again." Yes, indeed. We were not processing anywhere near the number of adoptions as in Romania, but many of the same circumstances existed. Peru was a very poor country, with a huge number of unwanted children, and the foreign adopting couples came with money.

What often starts out to be a very happy agreement between a couple that can't look after a child, and an adopting couple who want to provide a loving home, soon turns into stories of money and goods changing hands. Really, the villains in all this are not the birth parents or the adopting parents, but, in my opinion, the go-betweens who will sometimes

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shade the facts. They are the ones who make the money. The birth parents don't. And the adopting parents are willing to pay almost anything.

So, we then had another situation in November, 1991 in which three couples from the Chicago area came to Peru to adopt. They did it by proxy. Normally, in Peru it takes up to six months of residence in the country to effect an adoption and a good many of these people find it very difficult to do that. So, in these cases, they came to Peru the end of October, and by November 2nd, they had everything done, and came in for their visas. I said, "Wait a moment, how were you able to do this?" We asked for a more complete file. The file from the court said that these families were actually in court in October, when their passports said they hadn't even arrived in the country. So I said, "Wait a moment, we are going to have to look into this." We did look into it, and found that, although undoubtedly the court process in Peru had been short-circuited, it was a real judge who had signed a real paper. It was an adoption. It is not our job to go looking beyond that. So, we issued the visa. But it wasn't until December. So these people had to wait about 30 days. Normally a couple waits 90, at least.

Well, one of them, a doctor from the Chicago area, even though he had his visa and the child was home before Christmas, had media connections. He set out on a vendetta. He implied that I had screwed up in Romania and had been sent to Peru and had just done it all over again. He said we had been vindictive, we had sent him off to a dangerous jungle city for papers, when our job was just to review the papers and issue the visa. In fact, we had specifically told him not to go back into the jungle because it was a dangerous area. (Baby brokers would often choose remote areas where it appeared they had judicial authorities under their control, and things could be done that they weren't necessarily able to do in the city.)

There was the usual barrage of Congressional letters, and press notices. The couple went on another CBS morning show, I think it is "Good Morning America", and complained about me, specifically. So, once again I felt that I was really doing the right thing, but being

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unjustly criticized for it. We now have an American in jail in Peru for processing adoptions in these remote areas, circumventing the Peruvian legal system. These particular cases were not processed by him, but they are very similar, and I think we would have really been criticized if we had just issued the visa in these early cases, and it turned out that these were maybe kidnaped children, or adoptions that were not quite proper. So, I think we did the right thing by saying, "Wait a minute, let's take a look at the file." Thirty days is not an unreasonable time.

Q: What kind of support were you getting from the Embassy and Consular Affairs back in Washington?

CARSON-YOUNG: The telephone calls were somewhat guarded. People would start out by saying, "Now we are not criticizing, but have you thought of this, etc." I think when you have to say, "we are not criticizing" it tells you something. But basically, I got support. John Adams from the Visa Office is a friend of mine and he in fact sent me a special cable saying, "We know what you are up against and we understand."

Q: Well, then you retired?

CARSON-YOUNG: Then I retired.

Q: Looking back on this whole thing, what is your impression about the visa process? Where do you think the strengths and weaknesses are?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, the problem is basically just the overwhelming numbers. If we are indeed supposed to do any kind of screening-out overseas, I think we just have to have the resources to do it. Otherwise, turn visa processing over to INS and let them do it at the border, or whatever. But it is just impossible. I mean, I have supervised visa lines for a long time. I have seen junior officers who hate it. It seems to me that having at least a comfortable place with reasonable hours, air conditioning, whatever, is the least you can expect for such a grueling, stressful job. And you don't always have that. The officers

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involved simply despise it. It is something to do and get over with. And, as we were saying earlier today, they flip-flop quite often, with either a heavy denial rate and a righteous approach, or it is really easier to just approve, and many do so, taking the easy way out.

Q: Do you have any feeling that anything can be done about the whole visa law? If you had your druthers would there be any major changes made in the visa law?

CARSON-YOUNG: That is interesting. I don't know. I haven't really thought about it. It just seems to me that we have been moving in the right direction, in long term multiple visas, and more of it done by mail. I am not sure we were really meant to be policemen out there, making these judgments. I have been on several occasions at the point of thinking that it should be split off, the visa function, and just given to INS, or that we become a separate entity.

I didn't used to think that way, but I have also become rather "chip on the shoulder" about the attitudes that some of our colleagues have towards consular officers and what we do. In my experience, with certainly some exceptions, but I have served mostly under political appointee ambassadors and felt I got more consideration and respect from a political ambassador than I do from one of our colleagues. Because a political ambassador relates well to the public relations aspect of dealing with Americans. Our work would be more useful and interesting if we were not so harassed and so overworked. Again, I go back to my Belgian with the L-1 visa, who became a good source. We are the one section where people come to us. We see the old, the young, the rich, the poor, the educated, the uneducated. We see a cross section. Therefore, we quite often know more about what is going on in the guts of a country than some of our colleagues do. And yet we aren't asked, and we don't volunteer too much, because of at least perceived skepticism. Some of us, I think, don't want to be that much involved. They don't want to have the added burden of doing any reporting. But I, personally, like to be part of the team and I have done my damndest to be part of the team. I think it has been largely appreciated, but not always.

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Q: Well, Ginny, I want to thank you very much.

Attachment: December 28, 1992 letter from "Ginny to Stu."

December 28, 1992

Stu—

I am somewhat embarrassed, re-reading my interview, at how dissatisfied and self-righteous I sound. Could I add something?

Actually, my consular career was, on the whole, immensely satisfying and rewarding. I received awards and promotions. More than that, I had the feeling that for at least some people, I made a positive difference in their lives. And I had fun. Four years at four different posts is not a career I would necessarily recommend for others, but it certainly worked out well for me.

If I could change anything about my Foreign Service experience, it would be to put my assignment as principal officer in Merida at the end of the list, rather than next to the end. Inspectors told me I did a fine job at this, admittedly, a very small post. I felt very much fulfilled in that assignment—worked hard, traveled, knew people, managed quite well some very small resources (and was able to convince some people that I needed more). I did a lot of reporting—biographic reports on politicians, surveys of new commercial ventures, picked the brains of an American anthropologist and did an in-depth report on social and cultural aspects of Guatemalan refugees in my district (who were in fact, of Mayan Indian heritage). Merida, then, should have been my last assignment: my final assessment would have reflected pleasure at the opportunity to have such a satisfying career, and ended with only a regretful goodbye to a life that had been immensely fun and satisfying.

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Once admitted, my bitterness over perceived injustices has considerably diminished. During the recent Christmas holidays, I was invited to a Romanian Embassy reception for adopting parents and their children. When I was introduced, I told the group that I was pleased to see “the end of the story”. So often in consular work, we are involved very intimately in an individual's life, especially while he or she is being processed to live in our country. I used to wonder, sometimes, how it all worked out. In this case, I saw kids in Christmas finery and adopting parents looking so pleased and proud. I couldn't have been happier for them, and for myself: I knew I had been instrumental in making some of this joy possible. (Most certainly so, in my determined pursuit of humanitarian parole for several of these cases.)

So, please let me say that a consular career gave me an opportunity to grow and develop in a way that, looking back, amazes me.

I loved, in the beginning, the demands of just being madly busy, on a visa line. I loved the involvement with exotic people (the Americans who traveled to India, and the Indian officials whom I dealt with on their behalf).

I welcomed the opportunity in Hong Kong to extend my responsibilities for American citizens and thus get to know something of the world of international corporations. (I attended U.S. Chamber of Commerce meetings, hosted tax seminars, and as the voting officer, became very active in the League of Women Voters' election year activities.)

I had the chance to show what I could do as a political, economic and commercial reporter in Merida.

And my Romanian experience is one that I will never forget. I dealt first hand with repressed, desperate people. Ultimately, I was able to do something for a few of them. All unpleasantness aside, dealing with adoptions taxed my abilities to the utmost. I managed to steer an even course through a most difficult situation. I battled (and won) in

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a bureaucratic dispute that ultimately permitted adopting parents and their children to be united. I helped to bring about at least some of the joy I saw expressed at that embassy reception.

I am dismayed at my candor in this report and shrink in response to frequent expressions of self- importance. Nevertheless, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to assess it all. I have had a useful, satisfying career. I would like to end on that note, rather than my very chip-on-the-shoulder (now almost forgotten) comments of last July.

A Foreign Service career is what you make of it. Particularly, if you are a consular officer. I enjoyed the Foreign Service as a spouse and as an officer. I enjoyed my career. I like my life. I've been very lucky.

Thank you again.

(Signed) Ginny

End of interview